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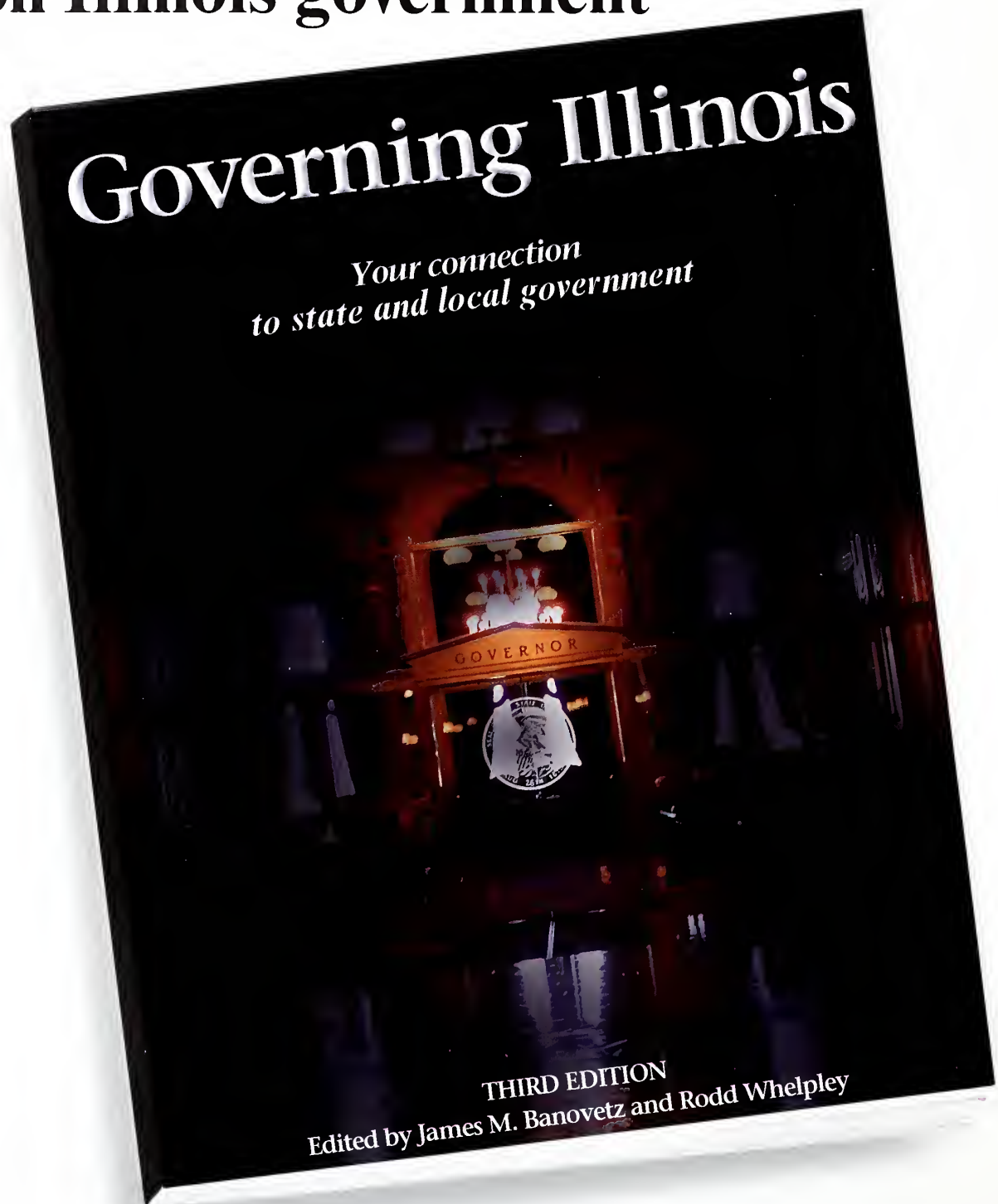
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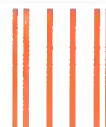
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Peggy Boyer Long



It's time to move from exploitation of the environment to stewardship

by Peggy Boyer Long

We can only imagine what the great prairies and the Great Lakes were like two centuries ago. We do know Illinois once was an ocean of tall grass, home to countless Henslow's sparrows and regal fritillary butterflies. On the north were vast inland seas of fresh water, filled with numberless blue pike and whitefish. Now those seemingly endless grasslands are gone, the lakes depleted.

In his 1999 book, *The Condor's Shadow: The Loss and Recovery of Wildlife in America*, ecologist David Wilcove details the destruction of these and other wild places, the subsequent disappearance or decline of the species that once thrived in them,

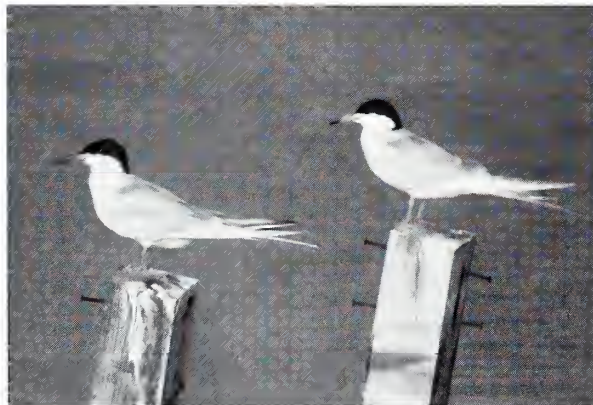
and our chances for restoring such degraded ecosystems.

In one sense, the story of the tallgrass prairie is simple. Less than 2,500 pristine acres remain in Illinois of what, at the beginning of the 19th century, had totaled some 22 million acres. What happened? The short of it is that such fertile ground proved too tempting to the plow. And the row crops that began, some 30 years ago, to dominate what was left of this rural landscape proved inhospitable to grassland birds, butterflies and flowers. The larger grazing mammals were hard-pressed, too, hunted to near-extinction or driven into shrinking remnants of earlier ranges.

The story of the Great Lakes is more complex. Because the ecology of the lakes is so varied, it must be told in five chapters. "Spanning more than 750 miles from east to west, and covering an area of 94,000 square miles," Wilcove writes, "these five water bodies constitute the greatest expanse of fresh waters on the surface of the planet, equal to 18 percent of the world's supply of fresh water. They are also among the most damaged aquatic ecosystems in the nation."

Among the culprits, Wilcove argues, are commercial overfishing, which began around 1820, pollution and the invasive species that are wreaking havoc on native stock.

Photograph by Dennis Ochmke



Forster's terns, Lake Sangchris, Sangamon County
On the Illinois endangered list

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The stories of the prairie and lake ecosystems of the Midwest are echoed in the stories of other American ecosystems, from the Pacific Northwest to the Eastern coastline.

But they are stories that cover time as well as space. The 19th and early 20th centuries in particular spanned an era of exploitation, including the mindless extirpation of species. The western-advancing settlers felled forests, plowed, then paved land, despoiled lakes and rivers, and fouled the air.

Yet we have learned much in 200 years. In the final quarter of the 20th century, we moved to

protect native species, preserve wild places, clean water and air.

We are still learning. Wilcove suggests as much. We realize, he writes, that species and ecosystems, including forests and grasslands, differ in their resilience to change.

"It's not simply the total amount of habitat that determines which species thrive and which decline; it's how that habitat is distributed across the landscape."

Songbirds, for instance, including those of Illinois, are vulnerable in fragmented forest tracts because predators tend to hunt along the edges of that ecosystem. This is true, as well, for the grassland birds.

We also have gained knowledge, hard-won though it is, about how

intensively we should manage protected habitats. The evolving policies on controlling fires and species populations in Yellowstone National Park are a case in point.

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



*Patterson bindweed
On the Illinois endangered list*

And we have garnered experience in species restoration programs. The release of the California condor back into the wild is one of the more inspiring examples of such an effort by scientists and conservationists.

Most important, we have begun to move from exploitation of the nation's resources to stewardship.

"We are," Wilcove writes, "for better or worse, the guardians of a significant share of the nation's flora and fauna. The extent of that responsibility grows with every species added to the endangered list and with every foreign plant or animal that gains a foothold in this country due to our negligence or stupidity." □

*Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at
peggyboy@aol.com.*

Photograph by Michael Jeffords



*Karner blue butterfly
On the federal and Illinois endangered lists*

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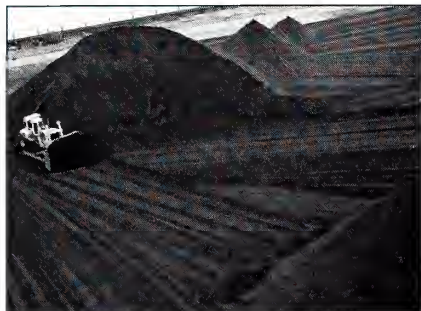
ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

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Back to Earth, page 27



Fragile beauty, page 17



Illinois gave at the coal mine, page 24

FEATURES

14 Got a plan?

by Bethany K. Warner

Some Illinois communities are preparing for the effects of growth. Others are sleepwalking into the future.

17 *Photo essay* Fragile beauty

A showcase of Illinois' threatened birds, butterflies and flowers

21 Purity's price

by Chris Wetterich

Communities struggle to meet costly new federal standards for drinking water just as the dollars designed to help dry up.

24 Illinois gave at the coal mine

by Joseph Andrew Carrier

Officials argue this state has paid a heavy price in the war against pollution and that new federal clean air rules would reverse hard-won gains.

27 *Books* Back to Earth

by Aaron Chambers

Throughout its history, coal has created problems then helped power solutions.

Credits: The photographs on our cover (counterclockwise) are of a peregrine falcon, courtesy of Dennis Oehmke; a Karner blue butterfly, courtesy of Michael Jeffords; a yellow fringed orchid and a downey yellow painted cup, close up and at a distance, courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

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DEPARTMENTS

3 EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

It's time to move to stewardship.

by Peggy Boyer Long

6 STATE OF THE STATE

Some predict water shortages.

by Aaron Chambers

8 BRIEFLY

30 PEOPLE

32 LETTERS

33 A VIEW FROM THE SUBURBS

Ho-chunks polish a casino pitch.

by Madeleine Doubek

34 ENDS AND MEANS

The governor shifts to fees.

by Charles N. Wheeler III

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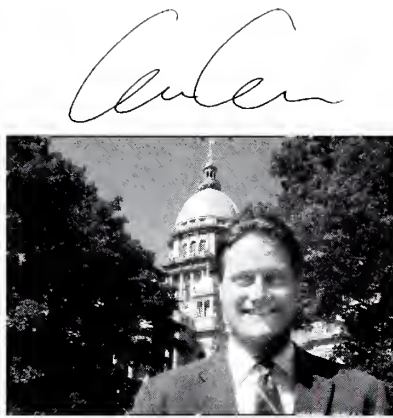
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Water shortages could lead to regional battles over this precious commodity

by Aaron Chambers

Kane County is just 25 miles from Lake Michigan, one of the world's largest sources of fresh water, yet it appears out of reach. As Kane develops new communities, or expands existing ones, county officials likely will need to look elsewhere for water.

Lake water consumers such as Kane County must bear the cost of infrastructure necessary to transport the water. That cost is greatest for towns farthest away. In addition, this state's share of Lake Michigan water is capped by a U.S. Supreme Court decree and a subsequent pact with other Great Lakes states. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, which manages allocations, plans to keep this state's diversion at or under that cap. But while the state could shuffle allocations within that diversion, lake water probably won't cover all projected additional demand in the suburbs.

"We just make the broad-brush assumption from the get go that it's not going to be an option for us," says Paul Schuch, Kane's water resources director.

Kane County does have its own sources. Towns there tap regional aquifers. Elgin and Aurora, the county's two largest towns, use the Fox River. But withdrawals from the Fox and other rivers are limited to maintain adequate flow. That puts

By all appearances, there should be enough. Illinois is home to multiple shallow and deep aquifers located mostly in its northern and central regions.

the burden largely on groundwater to cover additional future demand. And with sprawl continuing to fuel development in Kane, as in other Chicago metropolitan areas, there's concern that water supplies will prove inadequate.

By all appearances, there should be enough. Illinois is home to multiple shallow and deep aquifers located mostly in its northern and central regions. But planners don't know the extent of supply because profiles of the state's aquifers are not comprehensive. At the same time, groundwater withdrawals are virtually unregulated in Illinois. This has some observers predicting supply shortages that could lead to regional battles over what inevitably will become a precious commodity.

Not everyone, though, believes state regulation is a good idea. "The big problem we have is the state tries to paint everything with a broad brush,

and this doesn't fit every area," says Dorland Smith, executive secretary of the Illinois Water Authority Association.

There are 16 such authorities in the state, mostly in central Illinois communities near the Mahomet Aquifer. Under state law, a community can establish an authority by referendum. The authority then can regulate groundwater withdrawals in that area, restricting the ability of neighboring communities and other interests from drilling wells.

Smith says this local regulation of groundwater is more efficient than state-centralized regulation would be. "When a farmer decides that he wants to put in an irrigation system, if he had to go to the state and get a permit to put in the well, this could take months or longer," he says. "This is just not acceptable in our area where we know [supply] is not a problem."

The statute that provides for the authorities exempts withdrawals for agricultural and domestic purposes from authority regulation. In other words, a farmer who uses groundwater to irrigate crops, or a family with a private well, can pump at will.

State officials view these bodies with suspicion. Gary Clark, acting water resources director at the natural resources department, says water authorities materialize when central

Illinois towns such as Danville consider expanding their groundwater withdrawal capability. "They pop up thinking they can fully regulate anyone from the outside wanting to use groundwater, yet they don't have to regulate themselves because most of the use is agricultural or domestic," he says. "It's not a good way to run a water resource, but that's the law."

Illinois is not the first state to struggle with regulation and distribution of water. Arid states in the West have dealt with this for years. For that matter, water management is an international problem; around the world, water is increasingly recognized as something to be carefully managed.

But as Illinois enters this debate, state officials and regional planners recognize this state doesn't have a plan for managing water resources. Last December, a panel convened by former Gov. George Ryan warned: "Unless water quantity planning is conducted in a comprehensive, regional and visionary manner, water will not be managed effectively or efficiently, conflicts can be expected to escalate and water shortages can be expected to occur in some parts of the state soon, and in many parts of the state in the decades ahead."

Questions over the adequacy of downstate water supply are percolating, but the immediate focus is on the collar counties. The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, which covers the six-county Chicago metropolitan area, projects potential shortages by 2020 for 11 townships in that area: two in McHenry County, four in Kane, two in Cook, one in DuPage and two in Will.

So Kane is subsidizing a study of the deep bedrock aquifer that spans northeastern Illinois and shallow aquifers of interest to the county. The Illinois State Water Survey and the Illinois State Geological Survey are conducting the five-year study, launched last year.

Scott Meyer, a hydrogeologist and lead investigator, says concern over groundwater availability and projected increasing water demand related to population growth motivated the study. "Assuming that the U.S. Supreme

Efforts over the past decade to increase the state's role in managing water have failed in the face of substantial interest in keeping control of water management at the local level.

Court's decree is maintained and that these agreements with other Great Lakes states are written in stone, we can't expect any more water out of Lake Michigan for Illinois," he says. "Kane County is aware of that and aware that it might be prudent for them to look at other ways of accommodating that demand."

Separately, the water and geological surveys are collecting data on aquifers throughout the state to build a digital, comprehensive picture of groundwater. Derek Winstanley, chief of the water survey, says this study won't probe as deeply as the Kane County study because survey resources are insufficient. "That would require new financial resources over about a 10-year period."

Illinois law does provide for limited regulation of groundwater withdrawals. The Water Use Act, implemented in 1984, requires groundwater consumers to register wells expected to produce more than 100,000 gallons per day with local authorities. The locals, together with the state water and geological surveys, are then required to review a well's potential effect on other users of the same source. The state, under the law, has authority to restrict withdrawals in four counties: Iroquois, Kankakee, McLean and Tazewell.

The law also adopted the doctrine of reasonable use — defined in statute as "use of water to meet natural wants and a fair share for artificial wants" — for groundwater withdrawals. The new rule replaced the doctrine of absolute ownership, which gave landowners total discretion to take water below their lands regardless of any effect on

adjoining landowners. The change unified the statutory approach to both surface and groundwater; surface water already was covered by the riparian doctrine of reasonable use.

Still, it's unclear whether this statutory mechanism is sufficient to protect the groundwater supply over the long term. "There's a very clear law on reasonable use," Winstanley says. "The question is whether that is adequate to protect the aquifers and allow sustainable use of the resources."

Moreover, he and other state officials say the legislature has not appropriated funds to enforce the Water Use Act.

Efforts over the past decade to increase the state's role in managing water have failed in the face of substantial interest in keeping control of water management at the local level. And there are emerging efforts toward regional governance of groundwater.

The Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission is organizing a regional supply consortium of water managers from Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana. The commission hopes to raise money for further analysis of tri-state water supplies, build a regional plan and educate policymakers.

In central Illinois, local governments, water companies, water authorities and other entities interested in the Mahomet Aquifer formed the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium in 1998 to promote further study and regional management of the source. "We feel that we are best suited to manage the water supply in this area," says Smith of the water authority association.

But the extent to which Illinois groundwater is regulated in the future, and where control is based, depends, of course, on politics. "When all the interest groups come to the table to hammer out a compromise, we'll just have to see where that lands," says Clark of the natural resources department. "I don't think we'll see statewide regulation. It could be some form of regional-local control, but whether that means by county or district I just can't predict."

What's clear is that concerns in Kane County are just the beginning. □

Aaron Chambers can be reached at statehousebureau@aol.com.

BRIEFLY

Photograph courtesy of Madison County Transit

BIKEWAY

Where the rivers meet

One way to help the environment is to park the SUV and see Illinois by bicycle. A new 16-mile recreational bikeway that runs from Granite City to Alton follows the Mississippi River for most of the route, passing a lot of history, both cultural and natural.

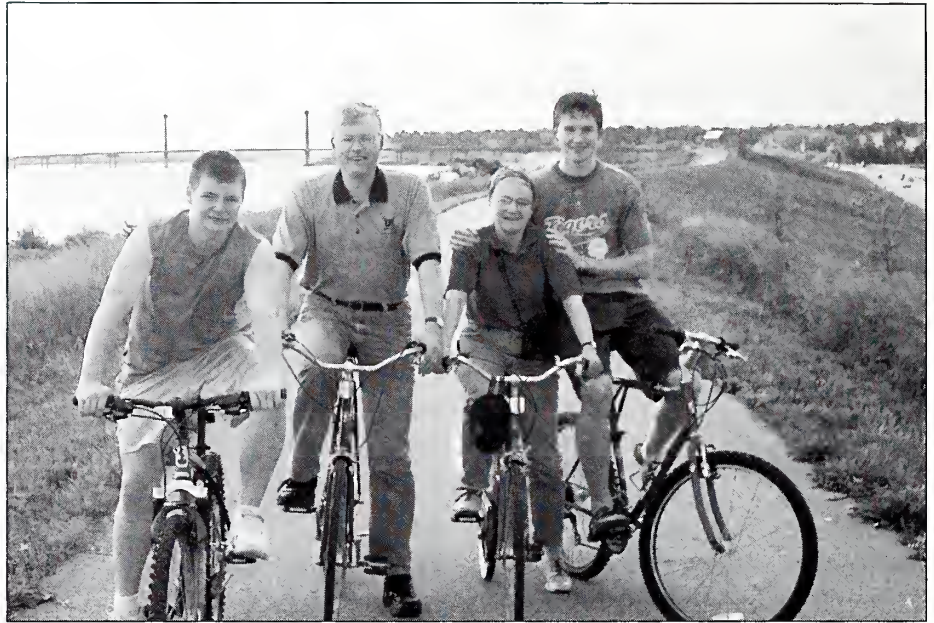
The route is part of the Confluence Greenway, which is a conservation, heritage and recreation corridor on both sides of the river in the St. Louis area. A bike path across the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge meets the Illinois route.

Funding for the \$5.1 million bikeway came from the federal Department of Transportation, the state Department of Natural Resources and Madison County Transit.

Recently restored and open all year for bicycles and pedestrians, the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge carried historic Route 66 across the river until it was replaced in 1968 by the Interstate 270 bridge. The side path crosses Chouteau Island, the land between the river and the barge canal that is mostly farmland and landfill now. Residents moved out after the flood of 1993, but future use includes a restored wetland and nature area with multiuse trails.

A few miles north, near the point where the Mississippi joins the Missouri River is the new Lewis and Clark Monument and Visitors Center in Hartford. Opened last December, it marks the site of Camp River DuBois, where Meriwether Lewis and William Clark wintered over with their Corps of Discovery 200 years ago before starting on their journey across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. Celebrations recognizing the accomplishments of the two-year exploration of the Louisiana Purchase begin in the fall.

Just below Alton, the bikeway runs along the visitors' center at the Melvin



State Sen. William Haine of Alton and his family often ride their bicycles on one of the six bike paths covering more than 75 miles in Madison County. Here the senator, his wife Anna, and their sons Joseph (left) and Thomas bike the Confluence Trail south of the Clark Bridge.

Price Locks and Dam, through which millions of tons of commodities pass on barges each year. The trail ends, or begins, at Russell Commons Park on the Alton riverfront.

Three blocks through town, cyclists can pick up the Vadalabene Bikeway on the Great River Road that passes by the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers at Pere Marquette State Park above Grafton.

In the future, the Confluence Trail south of Granite City will extend through Madison and Venice to the

Eads Bridge, completing a loop route along both sides of the Mississippi. The Eads Bridge will be reopened on July 4 after \$30 million in public investments. The first bridge across the Mississippi, it opened on July 4, 1874. Bicyclists and pedestrians enjoy a protected lane as part of the renovation.

It is one of six trails — with two others planned — covering more than 75 miles in Madison County. For more information, go to www.mct.org.

Beverley Scobell

Excerpt

“Taxidermy is now estimated to be a five-hundred-and-seventy-million-dollar annual business, made up of small operators around the country who mount animals for museums, for decorators, and mostly for thirteen million or so Americans who are recreational hunters and on occasion want to preserve and display something they killed and who are willing to shell out anywhere from two hundred dollars to mount a pheasant to several thousand for kudu or a grizzly bear.”

Susan Orlean writing in the June 9 issue of *The New Yorker* about the World Taxidermy Championships held in April in Springfield at the Crowne Plaza.

GLOBAL CLIMATE

Getting warmer?

Now for the Illinois weather forecast for the next century: Prepare for intense heat.

By 2095, the climate of Illinois will resemble present-day east Texas. Average temperatures will rise by 9 degrees to 18 degrees in the summer with more days of 90 degree-plus heat. Winters will be shorter, and extreme weather, such as thunderstorms and floods, will be more prevalent.

This is the prediction made in a report released in April by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Ecological Society of America. The groups conclude the entire Great Lakes region is experiencing climate change largely due to carbon dioxide and other so-called greenhouse gas emissions.

"We're doing this to ourselves by burning fossil fuels. It's leading to a major climate change," says Donald Wuebbles, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and one of the study's authors.

Warmer, drier weather would impact the fish population by driving out species that prefer cooler water; would lower lake levels, causing problems for shipping; and would cause drought-stress for agriculture as heavier rains would run off without soaking into the ground.

Still, the researchers say such change could be addressed by implementing policies that promote renewable energy and lower emissions of gases.

The U.S. Senate is considering legislation designed to accelerate reduction of greenhouse gas emissions with a market-driven system of greenhouse gas allowances that could be used interchangeably with automobile fuel economy standard credits. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat, is the sponsor, and Sen. Richard Durbin, a Springfield Democrat, is a co-sponsor.

In this state, a law passed in 1998 precludes the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the state Pollution Control Board from adopting rules to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate models typically don't match historical data, though, so the report's prediction may not pan out, says Jim Angel, state climatologist at the Illinois State Water Survey. He says Illinois' average annual temperature has only risen one-quarter of a degree since 1895. He notes that there was a period of warming through the 1940s, then a cooling period from the 1950s to 1980s and then warming again in the 1990s. "The only way we'll know if the models are right is to wait for 50 or 100 years."

Bethany K. Warner

BOOKSHELF

Guide locates Illinois' rare silkmoth

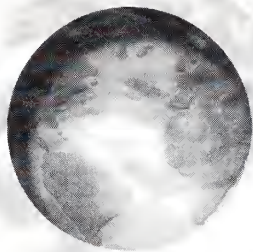
An evening visit from a luna moth, spreading her luminescent green 5-inch wingspan across the warm surface of a candlelit hurricane lamp, is now a rare summertime treat.

This once-common sight is in danger of being extinguished. The large and beautiful moths known as imperial moths or silkmoths are suffering population declines because of a parasitic fly that was introduced into North America from Europe as part of a biological control program targeted at the gypsy moth and other forest pest species, say entomologists John Bouseman and James Sternburg.

The two Illinois Natural History Survey scientists have written a *Field Guide to Silkmoths of Illinois* covering 19 species. Each account gives a full description of the moth in its larva, pupa and adult stages, along with its habitat, natural history and status. The authors, who also wrote the *Field Guide to Butterflies of Illinois*, have included distribution maps and more than 175 color photos.

Information about this and other field guides can be found on the survey's Web site at www.inhs.uiuc.edu.

Beverly Scobell



ENVIRONMENTAL FEES

Industries may challenge them

Industries regulated by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will pay an estimated \$56.3 million more in fees during the fiscal year beginning this month. Most of the new revenue, however, is not earmarked for the agency. And that has those industries crying foul.

"Are we really paying fees to cover the environmental programs or are fees now being used for general revenue purposes?" asks Sid Marder, a consultant for the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group. "That's a major concern."

The state agency is funded by three major revenue streams: general revenue funds, fees for permit applications and associated work, and federal funds. The new fee revenue is geared to offset \$22 million in lost general revenue funds under the governor's budget.

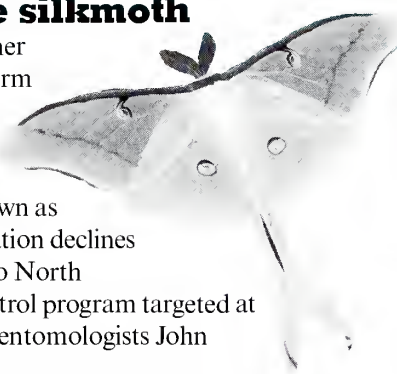
"When they looked at Illinois EPA, they looked at the fact that a lot of our programs are being supported by general revenue funds, but really a lot of what we do is regulatory in nature," says agency Director Renee Cipriano, referring to Gov. Rod Blagojevich's budgeteers.

But only \$22 million of the new revenue is earmarked for agency operations under the proposed fiscal year 2004 budget. The remaining \$34.3 million is slated for the state's general revenue fund, the main checking account. Funneling this new revenue into the general revenue fund was one component of the governor's plan to balance the state budget.

Budget office spokeswoman Becky Carrol says charging industries, including businesses that dump waste into Illinois waterways, above what's necessary to fund the Environmental Protection Agency is reasonable because general revenue funds pay for a host of environment-oriented programs. She cites vehicle emissions testing, promotion of sustainable agriculture, local government waste water treatment infrastructure, clean coal technology and protection of natural areas.

But Marder wonders whether these businesses should be responsible. A legal challenge is possible. He says certain businesses are examining the constitutionality of hiking fees to fill the general revenue fund.

Aaron Chambers



BRIEFLY

GREEN MAPS

Sustainable sites

The premise of Green Maps is simple: Chart the environmentally friendly places that promote sustainable resources and people will make better choices, which creates healthier places to live.

The School of the Art Institute of Chicago offers the Greenmap Project as a liberal arts course three times a year. Each semester a group of students chooses one of Chicago's 100-plus neighborhoods and locates all sites that promote sustainable, or "green," living choices. They use a set of 125 icons that represent a global visual language, which identifies and links environmental resources. Made locally, mostly by students, street-by-street maps can show every connection between nature and the designed environment. The icons can mark toxic hot spots, but they primarily represent beneficial natural and cultural sites.

For example, the map of Chinatown charts the only Chinese radio station in Chicago and a Department of Human Services office that offers exercise classes for seniors and a free clinic. The map includes several places to buy natural and homeopathic products and lists three parks and two dozen gardens.

Since 2000, Art Institute students have mapped 14 neighborhoods in Chicago. They are currently working on Hyde Park, on the city's South Side. "The maps give people choices," says instructor Nadine Bopp. "They are a helpful tool for tourists as well as the local residents."

Meanwhile, student Mark Hunt drew a green map of the upper Mississippi River as his senior geography project for Augustana College in Rock Island. He charted environmental and cultural attractions along the river, encompassing 37 towns from the Quad Cities north for 40 miles to New Albin, Iowa.

"The best thing I found doing the project was several scenic overlooks that were tucked away and would be hard for visitors to find without a map," he says.

All Green Maps are linked through a common Web site, www.greenmap.org. The idea was launched in 1995 and now has 205 projects worldwide.

Beverley Scobell



GREEN ROOFS

Chicago is a leader

Tar is out and grass is in on the tops of city buildings. And there's good reason. Thinking green can stave off summer heat and lower utility bills.

The discovery comes not a moment too soon. There's evidence cities are getting hotter. The temperatures generated by desolate and blistering roofs are causing a noticeable rise in ambient temperature in urban areas, a phenomenon called the "urban heat island" effect.

Further, researchers at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratories in Berkeley, Calif., found that this temperature spike has added an annual air conditioning cost of about \$2 billion to city budgets. The research, sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, also showed that by reducing ambient temperatures by 5 degrees Fahrenheit, cities could save \$3 billion annually, according to Hashem Akbari, leader of the Heat Island Group at that laboratory.

The most effective way to minimize the heat effect is to increase the amount of green space, says Akbari. And green or reflective roofs, trees and gardens can lower temperatures, reduce a city's consumption of energy and save taxpayer dollars.

Going green also might save jobs. Germany has promoted green roofs since the early 1980s and, according to an industry representative, approximately 12,000 people have found employment in that country's green roof industry.

The number of green roofs in the Chicago area hasn't been counted. However, the city is able to track city-owned or -assisted projects, says Kevin Laberge, an engineer for the city's Department of Environment. Completed green roofs include City Hall, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, the Chicago Center for Green Technology and a CTA substation located at Montrose and Broadway avenues.

To encourage others to install green roofs, the city is offering rezoning incentives to developers who use green roofs to balance open space lost in construction. The Chicago environment department suggests minimal maintenance, drought resistant, indigenous plants such as mosses, herbs and grasses as roof coverings in Chicago, providing the roofs can support the additional plants, soil and water.

There are other advantages to cities that landscape their rooftops. According to Green Roofs for Healthy Cities based in Toronto, most states that promote green roofing that alleviates the impacts of stormwater and sewer overflows in developed areas may be eligible for grants under the U.S. EPA's Clean Water Act.

Then there's the bonus of fresh flowers, herbs and vegetables. In Vancouver, the Fairmount Waterfront Hotel grows a garden on an accessible roof that saves the kitchen an estimated \$30,000 a year in food costs.

Chicago, although innovative, joins Oregon's Portland, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Baltimore in efforts to save taxpayer dollars by reducing the urban heat island effect, stormwater runoff and pollution.

For more information on green roofs visit these Web sites:

www.peck.calgrheclindex.html

www.greenroofs.ca

*Olivia Cobiskey
Chicago freelance writer*

PRESSBOX

The *Chicago Sun-Times* in its June 8 edition reports that asbestos debris has been discovered at the Illinois Beach State Park's nature sanctuary.

Roofing, siding, brake linings and other debris turned up in and among four to six acres of park dunes after an April wildfire, and was confirmed to contain asbestos by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency in late May, writes *Sun-Times* reporter Dave McKinney. The material, which littered the preserve's border with the Johns Manville Superfund site, was up to 400 feet inside the preserve. Asbestos can spur fatal cancer and other illnesses when microscopic fibers are inhaled.

"The discovery comes after IEPA Director Renee Cipriano and U.S. EPA Regional Administrator Tom Skinner separately rejected requests last year by [an environmental watchdog] group to survey the preserve within Illinois' most heavily used state park for asbestos and chemical contamination leaks from Manville's property," McKinney writes.

"Skinner and Cipriano let us down," he quotes Paul Kakuris, president of the Illinois Dunesland Preservation Society and the first to spot the asbestos-tainted litter.

State and federal authorities told McKinney that before the fire the debris couldn't be seen because of thick plant growth.

"The IEPA is operating under the belief that the material wound up in the sanctuary after being blown by the wind from a nearby waste heap capped in the early 1990s that is within the fenced-in Johns Manville boundaries," McKinney reports. "However, some of the material — such as rolls of asbestos-containing roofing sheets — would appear too heavy to be blown."

The *Chicago Tribune's* Julie Deardorff in that newspaper's June 4 edition reports that the piping plover, the most endangered bird in the Great Lakes region, had a significant population increase for the first time since

being listed as endangered in 1986.

Wildlife officials counted 51 breeding pairs of piping plovers last year compared to 32 in 2001. The hand-sized migratory shorebird, known for its flutelike cry, had been threatened by development and beach recreation. This summer's count will confirm that the imperiled population is rebounding, Deardorff reports.

"If the Great Lakes plover can be saved — and that remains a daunting task — it would mark a rare success story for a population whose numbers had plunged so low," Deardorff writes.

"At one time, 600 to 800 pairs of piping plovers nested along the shorelines of the Great Lakes. Now the modest recovery goal is 150 pairs — 100 in Michigan and 50 in the other Great Lakes states."

The plover had yet to come home to the Chicago area as of Deardorff's report. In the past, it has nested along small tracts of Lake Michigan's southern shore, including the designated critical habitats, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the Illinois Beach State Park.

"At one time, the bird's plaintive pipelike call could be heard throughout the Great Lakes," Deardorff writes. "But by the 1970s, it was eliminated everywhere but Michigan. The population had been declining since the 1940s, a victim of habitat loss. Gulls, crows, raccoons and skunks — predators that thrive around human activity — prey on plover eggs and their young."

"Beach activity — including walking, kite-flying, bonfires and camping — prevents the plover from feeding, flushes them from roost sites and destroys camouflaged eggs."

The *New York Times* details Illinois' decision to scrap plans to buy the Mies van der Rohe-designed Farnsworth house because of budget constraints. That move is the subject of a June 1 magazine story titled "Sex and Real Estate."

Former Gov. George Ryan, writer William Norwich reminds us, planned for the state to buy the house for \$7 million "and run it as a museum.

But the deal fell apart. The current Democratic leadership cites the purchase as being imprudent." This, he notes, is because of a \$5 billion deficit.

"Nothing really protects the house now from uncertainty — it could even be taken down and moved," Norwich quotes Lord Palumbo, the British patron of the arts who bought the house from Farnsworth in 1968 and decided to sell it three years ago because of health problems.

This is an issue of concern for the *Times* writer because the 1951 glass and steel residence is one of a trinity of landmark 20th century homes. The Plano house, which was built as a weekend retreat for Dr. Edith Farnsworth, "became the glass house that begat all glass houses," Norwich explains.

"With views that would send a feng shui expert to nirvana, the house hovers about five feet above the ground. Inside, looking out, nature becomes everything, from pageant to decoration. It is the house's religion," he gushes.

"Farnsworth House is also the setting for one of the juiciest tales in real estate, a story of how great architecture and perfectionism can be hijacked by love."

Farnsworth and Mies van der Rohe had been romantically connected, but ended up suing one another before construction was completed. More than money was involved, Norwich says. Devoured by mosquitoes and gawked at by the curiosity-seekers, Farnsworth screened in a porch and installed window blinds — actions clearly not in keeping with the Mies credo that less is more.

"Then, there was the all-important fashion issue," Norwich writes. "Edith had asked for a closet for her dresses," Palumbo says, "and Mies told her: 'It's a weekend house. You only need one dress. Hang it on the hook on the back of the bathroom door.'"

"Finally, the architect gave in and provided a closet, but to make his point, he did it in teak rather than the more rarefied primavera used everywhere else." □

UPDATES

Ethics, ethanol, SBC

Gov. Rod Blagojevich plans to change ethics legislation lawmakers approved and is threatening to order a special session if they fail to agree. He wants an inspector general to police the entire executive branch. And he wants to tighten rules governing gifts from lobbyists. Lawmakers didn't include those provisions in the bill (see *Illinois Issues*, June, page 3).

The governor approved extending the state sales tax exemption on ethanol through 2013 and creating a new tax credit for biodiesel fuels (see July/August 2002, page 25).

Meanwhile, a federal court in Chicago blocked implementation of a measure the governor signed that permits SBC Communications Inc. to double rates competitors pay to lease SBC's network in connection with local phone service (see June, page 8).

MONKEYPOX

Another summer, another exotic disease

The first case of monkeypox reported in the Western Hemisphere showed up in a home-based pet store in suburban Villa Park last month, causing illnesses in dozens of individuals in Illinois and neighboring states. Gov. Rod Blagojevich issued an executive order banning the sale, importation or display in this state of prairie dogs and giant Gambian rats, the exotic pets carrying the disease. Meanwhile, Illinois Department of Public Health officials tracked down animals sold and distributed by the store.

But state Department of Agriculture officials are concerned this is a virus that could jump to the state's wildlife population. In tropical forests in central and west Africa, where it is usually found, the virus is carried by squirrels.

Monkeypox is a relative of smallpox, but it is less contagious, less serious and rarely deadly. Health officials believe the virus jumped from an imported Gambian rat to prairie dogs.

Beverley Scobell

BIGHEAD CARP

Too close for comfort

A 38-pound bighead carp was pulled from a lagoon in a Chicago park last month. Though the lagoon isn't connected to Lake Michigan, the capture heightens concerns the exotic species could get into the lake. This filter-feeding fish can grow to 90 pounds, and biologists fear it could upset the food chain and affect sport fishing, says Tom Trudeau of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' fisheries division. Last summer, a bighead was caught in the lower Des Plaines River, just 55 miles from Lake Michigan (see *Illinois Issues*, February 2003, page 10).

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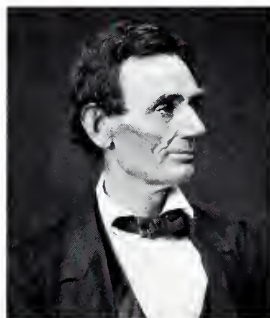
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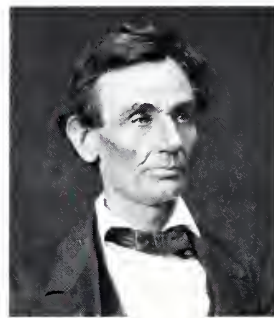
State Historical Society offers rare Lincoln prints

Archive-quality prints of two of the best-known photographs of Abraham Lincoln are now available to the public through the Illinois State Historical Society. Chicago photographer Alexander Hesler took the formal portraits on June 3, 1860. Because of the size of the negatives (8 x 10 inches), they are among the most eloquent and revealing photographs of our greatest president. The original negatives are in the Smithsonian but are in shards. According to Christie's auction house in New



York, the Society's plates are apparently the sole surviving set.

Matted prints of these portraits are \$150 apiece, plus tax (if applicable) and \$35 shipping and handling. They are also available in hand-crafted walnut frames for \$250 each, plus tax and \$45 shipping and



handling. Please place your orders with the Illinois State Historical Society, 210-1/2 S. 6th St., Suite 200, Springfield, IL 62701. Checks, money orders, and Visa or Mastercard credit cards may be used. Call 217-525-2781 for more information. Please allow four weeks for delivery.

BOOKSHELF

Ignorance is hardly bliss with environmental hazards in utero

In ignorance, abstain. Voltaire's maxim instructs pregnant women who want to know how much alcohol they can consume before harming their developing babies.

Yet neither the medical community nor state and local governments apply that guideline in determining a safe level of in utero exposure to toxins. So notes environmental biologist Sandra Steingraber in her recent release, *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*, which Berkley Books published in paperback in May. Steingraber's observation is a disquieting thread running through the book.

In her previous work, *Living Downstream*, the central Illinois native built a convincing argument that she — and other members of her adopted family — became sick because of exposure to chemical pollutants. Now she addresses toxic hazards through the lens of motherhood. *Having Faith* is a play on words, referring to more than the name of the daughter to whom she gave birth in 1998.

As she notes, birth defects are the number one cause of death in U.S. infants. But we have no national system to report birth defects or track trends that might lead to explanations for the causes.

"There is some kind of disconnect between what we know scientifically and what is presented to pregnant women seeking knowledge about prenatal life," Steingraber writes.

REPORTS

Foundation study shows Illinois kids' social environment is better

Illinois averages have improved since 1990 in several areas considered to measure childrens' overall well-being, according to the 2003 Kids Count report. The annual reports, coordinated in this state by the organization Voices for Illinois Children, are compiled by the nonprofit, Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation. For instance, in Illinois between 1990 and 2000, the child death and infant mortality rates declined, as did teen birth and dropout rates. However, at 8.5 per 1,000, the infant mortality rate in 2000 was still higher than the national rate of 6.9 per 1,000, putting Illinois' rank at 41st. In 1990, the state infant mortality rate was 10.7 per 1,000.

Summit points to income gap

Illinois' gap between rural and urban incomes is the fifth-largest in the nation, according to the 2003 report of the Illinois Poverty Summit, which was released in mid-June. Among Illinois' rural counties, almost half had a higher rate of poverty than the state average, according to an analysis of 2000 Census data by the summit, which is convened by the Heartland Alliance, a Chicago-based nonprofit organization. All 74 of the Illinois counties the group identified as rural had median family incomes below the state's, which is \$55,445.



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Updates

Got a plan?

Some Illinois communities are preparing for the effects of growth. Others are sleepwalking into the future

by Bethany K. Warner

It's a land-use squeeze play: Rockford is expanding eastward, while Chicagoland is creeping westward from McHenry County. Boone County is sandwiched in between.

"We're getting hit from both sides," says Mark Williams, executive director of Growth Dimensions, a nonprofit organization promoting economic development in that county.

Development spilling out of Chicago, for example, is just miles from consuming Belvidere, the Boone County seat that is more than 70 miles from the Loop.

This is a dramatic example of Illinois sprawl. But Belvidere and the county are prepared to manage growth as far into the future as 2050. The countywide comprehensive land-use plan protects agriculture, promotes mass transit and concentrates expected development into targeted areas. And it's designed to preserve open space between Belvidere and other Boone County communities. Floodplain areas are to be protected from housing developments. Zoning changes are under way to reduce the size of residential lots.

The goal isn't to stop growth, but to be ready to manage it. "Without a guide, you'd be going in all directions," Williams says.

Boone County's situation isn't unusual. Development has boomed on the outskirts of urban areas throughout the country since the end of World War II, converting agricultural land to subdivision housing or commercial areas. New construction often brings economic advantages. It also raises

concerns about destruction of open space, pollution of water and air, and erosion of quality of life.

Now some Illinois local governments are looking down the road at ways to alter development patterns and tailor growth. Most aren't, certainly. But those that are, like Boone County, can pick and choose from a sizable toolbox of strategies.

Chief among them is comprehensive planning, which allows local governments to prepare for growth. Once a community creates a vision for its future, it's up to the local government to enforce compliance. Changes in zoning laws, for instance, often are needed to implement so-called smart growth solutions: more compact, higher density areas that reduce damage to the environment.

"You're not going to stop the growth, so you might as well do it right," says Brook McDonald, president of The Conservation Foundation, an environmental protection nonprofit based in Naperville.

The state, though, doesn't require municipalities to engage in smart growth practices. Rep. Ricca Slone, a Peoria Heights Democrat and anti-sprawl reformer, has been pushing for that. And she's taking her case to Gov. Rod Blagojevich this summer. In particular, she plans to discuss ways in which state policies on school construction and transportation contribute to sprawl.

It's a controversial subject. Some, especially developers and home-builders, insist government should not

be in the business of dictating growth. They argue those decisions should be left to the market.

Some even object to the term sprawl, a word equated with unplanned growth. "It's pejorative rather than descriptive," says Jim Ford, an assistant director at the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. "What some call sprawl, others call home."

For those who have the word in their lexicon, sprawl is created by converting rural land into single-use, homogenous developments with separate residential, commercial and industrial areas, says Emily Talen, a professor in the department of urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Sprawl occurs downstate as well as in the Chicago area. Cities such as Peoria more than doubled in land size, but decreased in population density from 1960 to 1990. Sprawl in downstate areas is a "matter of scale," says McDonald of The Conservation Foundation. He says wherever development is happening, it needs to be done in a manner that enhances the quality of life and doesn't damage the environment.

Whether downstate or in the northeastern suburbs, unchecked growth can bring environmental and social costs. Of primary concern is loss of open land and farmland, a major catalyst for the debate over sprawl.

Illinois ranks first in the nation for acreage of prime cropland. Two-thirds of the state's total land area — 24 million of 36 million acres — is prime soil used for agriculture. According to



Boltonia decurrens, a threatened false aster, grows in Rice Lake Conservation Area in Fulton County.

Bob McLeese, a soil scientist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Illinois farmland is being lost at a rate of approximately 50,000 acres a year, about the size of two townships. "We're losing the best farmland in the world."

Sprawl also can degrade the quality of water. Rather than soaking into underground aquifers, in developed areas rain hits impermeable roofs and parking lots. This water then picks up pollutants on the ground — such as oil and gas in parking lots — and runs into storm sewers, then straight into streams, introducing more contaminants into the state's waterways.

Air quality, too, can be affected. Automobiles are being built with lower emissions, but any gain in the battle against pollution is offset when more people are forced to travel more miles. A study by the Texas Transportation Institute, part of Texas A & M University in College Station, shows that motorists in the Chicago and northwestern Indiana region were driving nearly 12.2 million more freeway miles in 2000 than in 1990. Those same drivers wasted an average of 67 hours per year stuck in peak-period traffic. "The more you sprawl, the more you

have to drive to do anything," says Richard Acker, regional land use coordinator with the Openlands Project based in Chicago.

Communities and counties that want to slow these trends have begun creating blueprints for what they want to look like in 20 or 30 years. Such comprehensive plans can address transportation, housing and open space. Talen says they should be a "holistic look at what kind of community you are building."

Kane County, for one, is revising its comprehensive plan. Phil Bus, executive director of the county development department, says it was necessary to stretch the range of that plan from 2020 to 2030 to stay current. The plan targets three regions in the county: established urban areas, new developments and agricultural land. But Bus says it can be difficult to get municipalities in the county to buy into this. Because local governments want development to increase their sales tax and property tax bases, Bus says those become disincentives to good growth practices. "It's an unceasing effort to try and establish partnerships with municipalities."

Creating such intergovernmental partnerships can be another tool. Belvidere and Boone County have a

standing coordinating committee to discuss issues that arise around the comprehensive plan and other land-use issues. To encourage counties and municipalities to work together, the Openlands Project this spring pushed legislation to offer incentives to governments that create partnerships to preserve natural, agricultural or historical resources. The proposal, which passed both chambers of the General Assembly, encourages governments to inventory the resources they have, then make development decisions around what they want to preserve. Gov. Rod Blagojevich was reviewing the bill at press time.

Other tools include downtown revitalization, brownfield redevelopment and infill development. They promote using land that has been developed, or filling land between an urban core and sprawling developments on the fringes. Environmentalists note it's hard to determine if these redevelopment patterns are curbing sprawl. But, says Jack Darin, director of Illinois' chapter of the Sierra Club based in Chicago, downtown disinvestment encourages sprawl.

People are moving away from urban areas, Darin says, because "there's something about the city that they

don't like anymore." Revitalization projects, then, are aimed at reversing this perception and attracting businesses and other activities that rejuvenate interest in the downtown.

Revitalization and redevelopment are occurring, at a minimum, in 56 cities and towns participating in the Illinois Main Street program. Wendy Bell, the program's coordinator, says though the program isn't designed to curb sprawl, more communities are looking at revitalization as a land-use issue. "It's much more cost effective to build on and reuse the current infrastructure than it is to build farther out and have more sprawl issues," she says.

Much as they are bringing businesses back downtown, communities are using brownfield redevelopment to bring industry back to abandoned industrial sites. Brownfield redevelopment requires former property owners to clean up environmental hazards at the site, so that new owners are not held environmentally liable for any problems developing from the original uses.

Developing areas in between old urban cores and fringe developments — called infill development — can prevent new development on open space farther out. Champaign's city planning director, Bruce Knight, says that community is planning to inventory the existing gaps to determine the reasons those sites haven't been redeveloped.

One such site, he says, is an old hospital contaminated with asbestos. The city is providing tax increment financing for the site to be cleaned up, demolished and then redeveloped into a high-density residential area. That will allow growth in property tax revenue to be funneled back into the development rather than city coffers.

Municipalities also can try to manage growth — or at least pay for the services required to go with growth — through developer impact fees. These fees are designed to help pay the costs of such capital projects as roads and schools that are associated with new growth. They have been widely used in the Chicago-area suburbs, but have not been prevalent in downstate communities. A 1999 study by the Chicago-based Heartland Institute found that impact fees for

schools could range from around \$900 for a single-lot, four-bedroom home in Aurora to more than \$3,000 for the same type of house in Burr Ridge.

Among the few downstate communities to use this tool is Springfield, which requires developers to post a surety bond of 110 percent of their share of the cost of improving arterial roads around new subdivisions.

Impact fees are controversial. Julie Sullivan, a lobbyist with the Springfield-based Illinois Association of Realtors, counters they can even encourage sprawl. If they are prohibitively high, she says, a developer may opt to go farther out if that area is linked to a different local government with lower fees.

Because sprawl is linked to single-use developments, changing zoning laws that segregate residential and commercial areas is yet another tool municipalities are turning to. "The physical form of development can and is being controlled by zoning," says Peter Skosey, a vice-president with the Metropolitan Planning Council in Chicago. Changing zoning laws can permit residential and commercial developments to occur in the same area. These mixed-use developments promote mass transit options and more "walkable" communities.

And communities are changing zoning laws to protect agricultural land, making it more difficult to build subdivisions. Sangamon County, for example, changed a zoning ordinance in 2001 that now requires land to be sold in 40-acre parcels rather than one-acre parcels. This change, says Randy Armstrong, Sangamon County zoning and building safety administrator, forces developers to come before the county board to request a zoning change from agricultural to residential. The change aims to protect farmland and encourage development closer to the urban core where it's easier to provide public services.

Developing around mass transit options or encouraging other forms of transportation also can curb sprawl. "Sprawl cannot support public transit," Talen says. To fight sprawl, she says, other forms of transportation need to be viable. Bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly routes help.

To prevent land consumption, some

municipalities and counties have been looking to preserve open space through a variety of means. Municipalities are choosing to buy land to preserve open space, or the rights to develop that land. Especially in the collar counties, buying land for preservation has been a popular method. According to Chris Slattery, director of the Chicago office of the Trust for Public Land, almost \$500 million has been approved in referenda for acquiring open space for forest preserves and parks. The Open Lands Trust program, run through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, has also funded the purchase of more than 50,000 acres of open space through direct purchase or matching grants to local governments.

Homer Glen, a village of 22,000 in Will County, is setting aside 11 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents before the village is built-up.

Municipalities also can buy development rights to open space, which is cheaper than buying the land outright. Buying development rights allows the owner to retain the property but collect some of the value of what future developments would be worth.

Ford of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Acker of the Openlands Project see evidence of the use of these tools — and their potential impact. Acker says if 100 infill development projects are completed, 100 businesses have not contributed to sprawl by locating in fringe areas.

So far, Belvidere's and Boone County's plan has officials there on track to encourage smart growth. The planning department isn't approving developments that deviate from the comprehensive plan. They're currently working on rewriting their ordinances to match it. A feasibility study is being conducted to look at possible commuter rail service development. "It wasn't just a plan on the shelf," says Williams. "You have to balance your growth."

It's unclear how widely these tools are used, but Talen is confident they work when employed. Still, she worries many communities are talking about sprawl and land-use issues, but failing to put any plans into action. "We're all just sleepwalking into the future." □

Fragile beauty

A showcase of Illinois' threatened birds, butterflies and flowers

Black-crowned night heron, Karner blue butterfly, fragile prickly pear. Look closely, look quickly, because they might soon be gone. All appear on Illinois' endangered list.

That official list covers but a fraction of the species that could be lost to us, to our children, to their children.

Many species are losing ground to habitat degradation. The prairies and forests that nurture them are disappearing. The rivers and lakes are filling with silt that carries and disperses water

soluble chemicals. The wetlands are being drained. The beaches are luring more people who disturb nesting sites.

But what would be lost, really, if the little blue heron is no more, or the regal fritillary or the false heather? True, we are no longer the Prairie State in a literal sense. Still, if we lose this web of life in this place, we will lose something of ourselves.

Walk lightly. Or this fragile beauty could disappear.

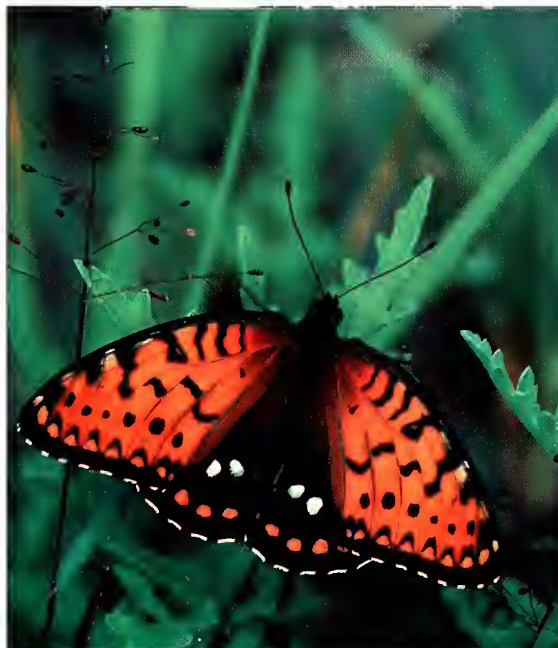
The Editors

Photograph by Dennis Oelmke



Peregrine falcon

Photograph by Michael Jeffords



Regal fritillary

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Yellowwood



Black-crowned night heron (immature)



Ill-scented trillium



False hellebore



Fragile prickly pear



Little blue heron (changing plumage from juvenile to adult)



Large-flowered beardtongue



Rose



False heather



Yellow-headed blackbird

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Hill's thistle

Courtesy Illinois of the Department of Natural Resources



White lady's slipper

Courtesy of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Pitcher's (dune) thistle

Courtesy Illinois Department of Natural Resources



White lady's slipper

Purity's price

Communities struggle to meet costly new federal standards for drinking water just as the dollars designed to help dry up

by Chris Wetterich

Four years ago, Yorkville, a growing community of 6,189 people in north-central Kendall County, faced a guessing game over how to make its local water supply safe to drink.

New standards for radium were under discussion at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Getting a jump on improvements before they were handed down could save money in the long run. But guessing what the standards would be was financially risky.

Yorkville waited. The EPA tightened standards as expected. But a shot at a loan for repairs had dried up. Now Yorkville residents face a spike in their water rates to pay for \$8 million in improvements and to cover potential fines from the state EPA for missing the deadline on meeting the new standards.

More than 450,000 Illinois residents, including those in Yorkville, are drinking water that doesn't meet federal standards for radium, a radioactive element that can cause bone and sinus cancer. And every local water system that serves more than 25 people faces a December 8 deadline to meet the maximum contaminant level for that element.

Compounding the problem for local officials, a source of assistance is running dry. A state loan program designed to help communities adopt the new standards will be depleted by summer and will not be replenished

until next winter, according to Illinois EPA officials.

Currently, 109 of Illinois' local water systems don't meet U.S. EPA standards, but only 29 are on track to get the low-interest loans that are available through the state and federal governments' Community Water Supply Loan Program, according to state EPA documents. That means locals will have to dig into their own treasuries to rid their water systems of errant elements or face sanctions, including fines, from the state.

Community water systems that don't meet the standards range in size from Bonnie Lane Water Supply, which serves 25 people near Yorkville, to Joliet, which serves 106,221 people in Will County. Central Illinois towns with radium problems include Colchester in McDonough County, Bryant in Fulton County and Glasford, Mapleton and Brimfield in Peoria County.

Radium makes its way into north and north-central Illinois water supplies because certain types of bedrock deep underground naturally have the contaminants. Over time, the radioactive elements decay, are ejected from minerals in the rocks and dissolve into the water supply.

In 2000, the U.S. EPA set a standard of 5 picoCuries per liter for two different types of radium combined. One picoCurie per liter means that a radioactive compound disintegrates

into a liter of water at the rate of 2.2 atoms per minute. The EPA estimates that the lifetime risk of cancer for water with 5 picoCuries of radium per liter is about 1 in 10,000, doubling for each additional 5 picoCuries per liter.

Yorkville has an average radium level of 14.9 picoCuries per liter. The water supply for 250 people in a mobile home park near Marseilles in LaSalle County has an annual average radium reading of 26.3 picoCuries per liter.

The state EPA stopped enforcing the radium standard in 1990 after the U.S. EPA published new rules increasing the amount of radium that could be allowed in drinking water, says Roger Selburg, head of the state EPA's public water supplies division. Because the older standard was stricter, allowing less radium, questions arose about which standards would apply. That debate went on for about 10 years. Then in 2000, the U.S. EPA finally announced it was sticking with the older, stricter 5 picoCuries per liter standard.

Hence Yorkville's dilemma.

"By having that standard be debatable for years, our community kept saying, 'Don't do the public infrastructure work until it's mandated,'" City Administrator Tony Graff says. When the tougher requirement was finally adopted, Yorkville decided the most prudent option was to connect its drinking

The state loans make projects much cheaper because the interest rate is 50 percent less than the market rate. During 2002, a \$1 million loan at a 2.675 percent interest rate would save a community water system \$343,000 over the 20-year loan period.

water system to the local sanitary district and allow that agency to collect the radium. But the city won't come into compliance with the new standard until July 2004 at the earliest.

One saving grace is the city's growth. Developers are building three new wells that are scheduled to come online in July 2004. Those wells will be capable of producing water that meets the EPA's requirements. And once those wells are online, the infrastructure can be built to transfer radium from the older wells to the sanitation district.

"We're in a better position than most because we have growth dollars coming into the community," Graff says.

But the city will still have to spend \$8 million to put its long-term plan in place. In addition, Yorkville may have to pay a fine for not complying on time. Once the state EPA starts an enforcement action against noncomplying communities, the case is referred to the state attorney general, who can request that the court fine the local water system. The fine can range as high as \$50,000 for the first day of noncompliance and \$10,000 for each additional day. But Graff says he thinks Yorkville might get a break because it has tried to fix the problem.

Water systems that have taken steps to lower radium levels likely will get a pass, the EPA's Selburg says. "If they're well under way and they've started well into the construction, it's doubtful a decision would be made to continue with enforcement actions."

Still, some of the 109 communities that are out of compliance may not make the deadline because funds are short in the government's loan program, says Ron Drainer, the state EPA official who oversees those loans.

The federal government provides about \$1 billion annually to the states for the program, and Illinois gets nearly \$30 million. The state must match 20 percent of the money, making about \$35 million available each year. Last year, the agency leveraged funds by selling bonds, making an additional \$25 million available.

But Drainer estimates the total need for the program is \$500 million, including money to fix other problems such as a 2005 deadline to meet new

standards for arsenic. "We have more demand than we have available funds." He says the rocky economy has stalled discussions about increasing funding to help maintain aging water systems.

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Because the radium deadline is approaching fast, the state EPA has put communities with that problem near the top of the priority list for loans. Communities that don't get a loan would have to start paying to fix the problem now, and the state EPA might be able to help them refinance it later when more loan money becomes available. "But that's more expensive and may not be doable for certain communities," Drainer says.

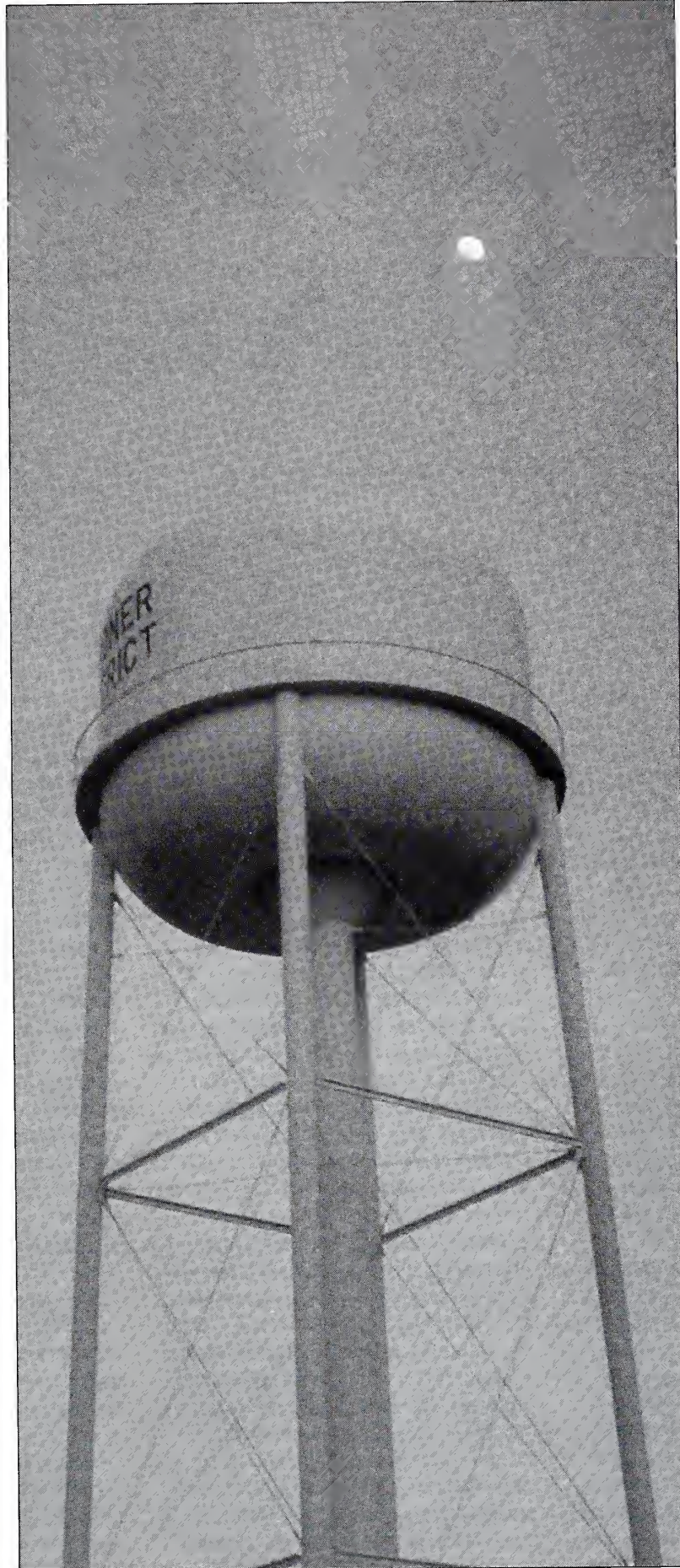
Yorkville, though, will have to get loans at the full market rate. That community was knocked off the eligibility list for a government loan because it had a stopgap solution.

The new rules also mean an increase in water bills for customers. Environmental officials estimate households in systems serving 10,000 people or more will see their bills increase \$30 per year, while those in systems serving less than 10,000 people will spend \$50 to \$100 more per year.

Graff estimates new construction to fix Yorkville's two existing wells will mean a spike in residents' water bills of up to 15 percent. That increase could have been as high as 70 percent if the area hadn't experienced growth that necessitated the new developer-built wells. Residents also will have to pay the full market-rate interest on the loan for the new construction as well as any fine the courts level against the town.

"We could have resolved this issue 13 years ago," Graff says, "and it would have cost the taxpayers a lot less money." □

Chris Wetterich, a recent graduate of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield, was an intern for the Chicago Sun-Times.



Illinois gave at the coal mine

Officials argue this state has paid a heavy price in the war against pollution and that new federal clean air rules would reverse hard-won gains

by Joseph Andrew Carrier

Illinois has joined 12 other states and the District of Columbia in asking the U.S. Court of Appeals to review new rules they contend will take the teeth out of the federal Clean Air Act.

Much is at stake for the mainly Eastern states involved because they've long borne the brunt of acid-rain-producing industrial pollution from older coal-fired plants in the Midwest. But officials here believe Illinois has a stake in the issue, too. Air quality experts at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency fear changes mandated by President George W. Bush's administration threaten to undo hard-fought emissions reductions in this state.

In fact, turning back the clock on air quality standards would prove to be a bitter pill for Illinois. Not only has this state had to bear the cost of clearing the air at its many industrial sites, but the clean air standards in force for the past three decades have meant Illinois' high-sulfur coal has been too dirty to burn.

The 13 states involved include Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New York and Vermont. Their petition before the Washington, D.C.-based court argues the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's order is invalid because the federal Clean Air

Act prohibits modification unless the change ensures "equivalent or greater emissions reductions." The states contend the U.S. EPA's rule changes — ordered after the president failed to push through mirror legislation — don't meet that challenge.

The new rules ease pressures on the power industry, a major target of the Clean Air Act because of its reliance on sulfur-dioxide belching coal plants. It exempts power producers who retrofit older plants from some demands to meet tougher clean air standards under federal law.

Under that law, new plants are required to install costly equipment to remove such pollutants as sulfur dioxide. Older plants were to install "scrubber" technology if and when they modernized.

That compromise was engineered under the logic that the older facilities would eventually be retired and that cleaner units would be built to replace them. However, most energy producers continued to rely on their older facilities operated under the less stringent emissions standards. A combination of regulatory misdirection and economic reality made it cheaper and easier for companies to maintain older plants than to make major investments in

newer, cleaner technologies.

All of Illinois' 23 coal-fired plants would fail to meet the more stringent standards for new plants, according to the state environmental agency. Still, many of those plants have been making progress toward reducing polluting emissions.

Dave Kolaz, chief of the Illinois agency's Bureau of Air, says a good example of the trend is Dynegy Midwest Generation's power plant in Baldwin. One of the largest plants in the state, it has dramatically reduced its emissions since 1999, when it was belching 245,243 tons of sulfur dioxide annually, more than the power plants in some other states combined. The 26,267 tons that plant emitted in 2002 sounds like a major improvement, and it is. But, as Kolaz points out, this is still three times the pollution the Illinois EPA would allow a new plant at start-up.

The unintended consequence of the regulatory loophole provided to older plants has led parties from both sides to look for new, long-term approaches to emissions control. "Everyone who looks at this agrees that it is broke," Kolaz says. The question is how to go about fixing it without undoing the progress made so far.

Two other measures now under



consideration in Congress could provide power companies with the regulatory certainty they are looking for without handcuffing the agency's ongoing efforts. The Clean Power Act, introduced by Sens. James Jeffords, a Vermont Independent, and Joseph Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat, would combine tougher emission caps with shorter deadlines. The Clean Air Planning Act, introduced by Sens. Thomas Carper, a Delaware Democrat, and Lincoln Chafee, a Rhode Island Republican, would initiate a phased-in cap-and-trade program. These plans, which have been used with great success to reduce acid rain, provide incentives for companies to reduce emissions even beneath standard limits because they receive credits they can sell to other companies that aren't yet meeting those limits.

Both proposals include caps on carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming. The president's plan omits carbon dioxide limits.

The Bush Administration's rules, dubbed the Clear Skies Act in their legislative incarnation, were a nod to complaints from the power industry, which protested the old standards were confusing to implement and punished creative solutions to emissions

problems. Jim Rogers, CEO of Cinergy Corp. and spokesman for the power industry's Edison Electric Institute, told a U.S. Senate subcommittee on the environment: "We've come a long way under existing Clean Air Act programs, but the 30-year-old law is ill-suited to help us meet the challenges we face today.

"The net result of the current system is a planning nightmare that makes it virtually impossible for electric generators to have any stable notion of what requirements will be in place in the future." The power industry contends that setting long-term standards will give them the economic and regulatory stability they need to sell newer, cleaner generation units to investors.

Kolaz agrees the current regulatory climate punishes investment in technology. It is difficult for a newer, cleaner facility to compete against an older, dirtier plant with much weaker regulations. "Periodically, in the life of a plant like that, you have to enforce more stringent controls to make them meet the same standards as the newer plant. Otherwise, it will always be in their best interest to keep fixing the old plant."

The administration's solution alters regulations on modifications of existing

plants in four ways. First, it changes the way emissions standards are set for each facility. Previously, the Illinois environmental agency compared proposed changes with the past two to three years when calculating whether a modification will create excessive emissions increases. Under the new rules, facilities are allowed to use emissions figures from the worst 24-month period over the past decade. This could allow some facilities to increase emissions without penalty.

The definition of the kinds of changes that would fall under "routine maintenance" also was modified. Kolaz says changes allowed under the new rules would previously have been categorized as "major modifications," and would have kicked facilities into the more stringent emissions requirements. "The changes that the [new rules] are making, in our opinion, will make it possible for sources to modify existing equipment and have major increases in actual emissions."

A third change grants facilities that install the best available emissions controls an exemption from further review for a period of 20 years. Kolaz says, "that seems reasonable, if they did in fact put on the best available control." But he balks at the U.S. EPA's

“In Illinois, we have made real sacrifices to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. Coal mines have shut down, workers have lost jobs, all in the name of clean air policy.”

insistence that the exemptions be retroactive. “It will be difficult for us to go back and ascertain if it was, in fact, the best available control technology back then. As written, it is going to create a loophole for a lot of facilities.”

A fourth adjustment sets what are called plantwide applicability limits, forcing the states to evaluate emissions at facilities on a sitewide basis. The Clear Skies rules allow polluters to “lock in” a set emissions baseline and make modifications to specific components of the facility as long as the whole site remains under that cap. “We feel that the specific approach they have taken is seriously flawed,” Kolaz says. “They don’t have provisions to tighten that cap periodically. Once the cap is set, they are allowing it to remain in place for 10 years without change.”

Kolaz fears that without the ability to tighten requirements, the state might lose some of the ground it has won recently in battling air pollution. Since 1999, power plants in Illinois have reduced sulfur dioxide emissions 714,000 tons to 360,000. “My point is that companies do make reductions. What we’d like to do as they do that, as they get new technology and make changes, is to lock it in. Implementing these changes in this way might allow companies to backslide, and that is something we want to avoid.”

Many environmental groups, including the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago, contend the president’s plan is impractical and dangerous. Faith Bugel, a member of the policy center’s legal team, says, “The administration’s position that these changes will make facilities able to run more efficiently and able to make changes that will decrease emissions is really without a strong basis in the practicality of how the regulations will actually operate.” Bugel’s view echoes that of many environmentalists who contend that giving polluters a relaxed regulatory climate in the hopes they will make sound decisions on their own is placing an unjustified measure of faith in an industry that historically hasn’t done anything unless forced.

Each of the reform plans is predicated on the idea that regulatory freedom and predictable expectations will

be incentives to make responsible environmental decisions. Kolaz says, “It makes environmental groups particularly uncomfortable because they would like to have the absolute command-and-control certainty that stringent rules require. But there are others who would like to live in a more market-driven scenario where you can provide incentives for companies to do the right thing. But you need to provide the flexibility for companies to operate.

“If we sit down with them and set plantwide limits on their emissions,” he says, “and had a periodic and reasonable ratcheting down of those emissions requirements to reflect the new control technology that is becoming available, and said, ‘As long as you stay within those limits you can make the changes at your plant that you think are economically feasible and necessary,’ that would work well.”

Kolaz says an ideal revision of the act would give industry stability while not crippling regulatory controls.

As they stand, the federal changes amount to a slap in the face to a state that has suffered much in effecting compliance in the view of Illinois’ U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin.

“In Illinois, we have made real sacrifices to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act,” he told reporters in January. “Coal mines have shut down, workers have lost jobs, all in the name of clean air policy. And how does the administration respond? By rolling back the existing policy and rolling right over the people of Illinois.”

Durbin, a Democrat who has been trying during most of his political career to save a dying Illinois coal industry, says weakening the act now, after so much has been gained at such a high cost, is nothing short of irresponsible.

“States like Illinois have given at the office, at the coal mine and in the small communities to make our air cleaner,” he said in a prepared statement. “The coal industry in my state has all but disappeared because of the Clean Air Act. It is unconscionable to say to my state, ‘Your sacrifice and your contributions have been meaningless.’” □

Back to Earth

Throughout its history, coal has created problems then helped power solutions. Now scientists and politicians are exploring ways to capture and store its greenhouse gases

by Aaron Chambers

Scientists peering into the depths of the earth, pondering the future of energy, are engaged in an exercise resembling one performed for generations. When the time comes to move the world forward, humankind looks to the earth for answers. But there's a twist this time: Researchers are looking for solutions to problems associated with burning fossil fuel, not exploring ways to find it.

Centuries of burning coal have pumped an immeasurable pool of carbon dioxide into the air. It's a simple gas that people exhale when they breathe. But it's also a greenhouse gas, a gas that traps heat, and many scientists believe it contributes to global warming.

This carbon dioxide has been locked in the earth for some 330 million years. When plants, which absorb the gas as part of photosynthesis, collapsed into primordial swamps, they failed to decay and release the carbon gas. Instead, they massed into layers that were pressed into coal.

Now, the relatively rapid release of that carbon into the atmosphere is threatening to bake civilization. Simple abandonment of reliance on coal is not likely, though: The world's machinery, its economy and the lifestyles of people in developed countries depend on electricity that is generated by coal. So industry and government are trying to determine how best to contain the release of more carbon gases. They argue that returning it to the earth is logical. Reservoirs that once held coal

or oil, they say, kept their composition for hundreds of millions of years and should stay that way for many more.

In December, researchers associated with the U.S. Department of Energy began injecting 2,100 tons of carbon dioxide into a depleted oil reservoir in New Mexico. They're monitoring the reservoir to see whether it restricts the gas plume. Similar experiments are under way elsewhere.

In Illinois, state officials are conducting a study to determine where best to sequester carbon gas in the future. They hope the federal government, together with the energy industry, will choose Illinois to host a futuristic power plant that would employ carbon gas sequestration. And they hope to demonstrate that Illinois is sufficiently prepared to capture and store those gases.

This is but the latest chapter in humanity's endeavors with coal. The process of sequestering carbon gases clearly is a contemporary one involving cutting-edge science and technology. But the story of civilization's tumultuous connection to coal is an old one.

This black rock has for centuries fascinated and annoyed people. Barbara Freese tells that story in her book, *Coal: A Human History*, published this year. Freese, a St. Paul, Minn., author and lawyer, writes that people fought the grueling hours and conditions mining companies imposed on workers, as well as coal's dense black smoke that at times blocked London from sunlight. And they found ways to navigate

waterways, such as the Lehigh River near Philadelphia, in their efforts to move this commodity.

Freese tracks the evolution of coal's role in society from the Roman invasion of Britain 2,000 years ago, when soldiers burned it in their forts, through the coal-fired industrial age of England and America to the modern era with its concern that burning coal saturates the atmosphere with noxious gases. It's a story about the drive for progress, and the tension inherent in that drive.

When the English wanted to dig deeper for coal, but were impeded by flooding, they developed the steam engine to pump their mines dry. And when they needed a more efficient mode of transporting coal than horse-drawn carts, they developed the locomotive. Both were run on coal.

"The difficulty of hauling coal had always been one of its greatest drawbacks as a fuel, but now, through the locomotive, coal could haul itself; similarly, through the steam engine, coal could pump the mines that contained it," Freese writes. "The patterns were the same: Coal created a problem, then helped power a solution, and that solution would have revolutionary consequences far beyond the coal industry."

This tension has marked numerous points in the evolution of coal's link to humanity. When coal mining forced horrid working conditions on miners, and later on workers in factories that



A frontloader piles coal to be converted into power.

could operate around the clock with coal-fired lamps, labor organized. For a time early in the last century, before interest in oil diffused interest in coal, the United Mine Workers of America was one of the most powerful unions in the nation. John L. Lewis, the union's president at the time, was widely regarded as the country's second most powerful man next to the president.

As with any powerful force, coal naturally intersects with politics. Observers need only reflect on the election of President George W. Bush in 2000, and his subsequent coal-friendly policies. Bush beat Al Gore by five electoral votes, and five is the number of votes the Republican gained in winning West Virginia, a traditionally Democratic and major coal-mining region. The Bush campaign initially ignored that state, but the coal industry, which perceived Democrat Gore as too environmentally friendly, persuaded the campaign to court West Virginia's voters.

The Wall Street Journal in June 2001 documented the industry's effort to swing the state for Bush. It reported that while other factors contributed to Bush's victory, including aggressive efforts by the National Rifle Association and

anti-abortion groups, "it was basically a coal-fired victory."

Bush Administration policies favorable to coal are well documented. The administration dismissed the international Kyoto agreement to curb global warming. And it relaxed a federal requirement that old coal-fired power plants implement clean-air standards when they modernize.

Closer to home, Gov. Rod Blagojevich also may have been helped into office by coal, but his victory last year is more difficult to quantify in this respect. Blagojevich won the Democratic nomination last March due to a massive labor-based downstate effort, which included coal interests. He, too, is supporting coal. In May, he proposed \$50 million in financial incentives — funds contingent on the use of Illinois coal — for developers of a proposed coal-fired plant near Elwood, just south of Joliet.

Buffalo Grove-based Indeck Energy Services Inc., the developer, proposes a 660-megawatt facility employing circulating, fluidized bed combustion designed to ease the capture of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollutants.

But environmentalists complain this technology is not clean enough. They

say the plant should process coal by gasification, which is more efficient and cleaner than combustion. That involves superheating, rather than burning coal to deconstruct its molecular structure. Valuable gases, hydrogen and carbon monoxide, are captured, while sulfur and other pollutants are removed. This technology is expensive, though. Gasification-based power plants cost an estimated \$1,200 per kilowatt to build, compared to \$900 per kilowatt for conventional coal plants, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

At a hearing in May on Indeck's application for a permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Indeck executive Jim Thompson said the company rejected gasification because it's "not commercially demonstrated."

There's no question pollutants produced in burning coal constitute the most persistent point of tension in its use. And as Freese observes, this tension has been apparent for several hundred years.

She writes that when British nobles gathered for a session of Parliament in the summer of 1306, they took offense to the obnoxious odor of the coal burned in London by blacksmiths and

other artisans. The nobles demonstrated against coal burning, King Edward I banned its use and laws were passed to punish offenders. But in light of England's emerging wood shortage, the nation soon abandoned the ban. Despite evident adverse consequences, the English perpetuated coal's life as a fuel. "They learned to tolerate what had been intolerable, becoming the first western nation to mine and burn coal on a large scale," she writes. "In so doing, they filled London and other English cities with some of the nastiest urban air the world had yet seen."

That dependence on coal persists. The United States, in fact, burns more of this fuel than ever before; 50 percent of its electricity is generated by coal. Coal smoke is not as visible as it was; it no longer flows from thousands of urban chimneys. But American power plants that burn coal to spin turbines with steam consume more each year.

There are alternatives to burning coal and other fossil fuels. Hydrogen is the most popular among environmentalists who want more attention paid to fuel cell technology such as that used to power the space shuttle. The emission from these fuel cells is water.

The Bush Administration has called for more research into this technology. And economist Jeremy Rifkin pictures a world dependent on hydrogen fuel and free from fuels that emit carbon in his book, *The Hydrogen Economy: The Creation of the Worldwide Energy Web and the Redistribution of Power on Earth*, which was published last year.

But, at least in the short term, the practice of burning coal seems sure to continue. The policy focus, then, is on limiting harmful coal-related emissions. "I don't think I can say that we're pursuing carbon sequestration simply because we want to burn coal," says a federal energy department spokesman. "But the fact is we're going to continue to burn coal. We have to. It's much too plentiful a resource and much too cheap."

The federal government has taken steps to limit sulfur dioxide and other coal-fired pollutants. Amendments to the federal Clean Air Act in 1990 require power plants to gradually reduce their output of these emissions.

The Illinois coal industry is acutely

familiar with this law. As coal mined in this state tends to be high in sulfur, power plants here switched to low-sulfur coal typically found in Wyoming and other western states rather than install expensive "scrubbers" to cleanse sulfur from exhaust. Coal interests say that move devastated mines in southern Illinois and the towns that surround them.

There is no federal mandate limiting emissions of carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas that results from burning fossil fuels. And there's no indication that such a policy is near. Still, the feds are focused on developing sequestration technology into compatible, affordable instruments for coal-fired power plants.

There are two steps in carbon sequestration: capture and disposal. Capture technology exists, but is still too expensive to be considered commercially viable. Scott Klara, product manager for the carbon sequestration program at the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory in Pittsburgh, says his program's goal is to reduce the cost of capture technology to a 10 percent increase in the cost of electricity or energy services by 2012.

He says his program is primarily aimed at reducing carbon dioxide emissions from coal, as opposed to other fossil fuels, for three reasons: Coal is important to the American and world economies, burning coal is a significant source of carbon dioxide emissions (37 percent) and this country's coal-fired emissions, unlike those from oil, come primarily from large stationary power plants where carbon gases can be more easily captured than from sources such as cars.

As for disposal, or sequestration, the leading candidates are saline aquifers, depleted oil fields and abandoned coal mines. The Illinois State Geological Survey is examining this state's geologic structure in preparation for application for a state-of-the-art power plant. A proposed \$1 billion hydrogen production plant called FutureGen, a joint federal/industry initiative, would be coal-fired and nearly emission free through the use of gasification and sequestration technologies.

"If this technology is adopted and

becomes successful, we would be able to use the major coal resources that Illinois has without releasing carbon dioxide that contributes to the potential for global climate change," says Robert Finley, lead investigator for the Illinois study. He says the survey is evaluating Illinois' capability for sequestration, under a \$58,000 contract with the state Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, in an effort to realize the potential benefits of FutureGen. The state also has applied for a \$1.8 million federal grant to conduct a more comprehensive study.

There are risks associated with pressurized carbon dioxide, though any associated with sequestration are not clear. In perhaps the most bizarre catastrophe associated with carbon dioxide, a lake in a volcanic crater in Cameroon exploded in 1986 when it became saturated with carbon dioxide that seeped from the earth. The cloud of gas that escaped from the lake, heavier than air, slid down the mountainside, settled over a nearby village and smothered some 1,700 people.

The U.S. energy department's Klara says sequestration is unlikely to prompt such catastrophic events. Of greater concern to officials, he says, are slow leaks from reservoirs. Even then, he says, interest centers on the quick loss of gains made with sequestration.

Still, Finley says a comprehensive evaluation of Illinois' geologic foundation would involve examination of any potential reservoir's proximity to the New Madrid seismic zone that stretches from the southern tip of Illinois south to Arkansas. He says the state would stay away from far southern Illinois as an injection area, most likely ruling out the first three tiers of counties closest to the quake zone. But he says avoiding that region would not inhibit the state's ability to sequester carbon gases. That group of counties, he says, covers only a small part of the central and southern Illinois regions underlain by saline aquifers.

Such reservoirs held their contents for hundreds of millions of years before modern civilization tapped them. Scientists hope they stay that way, their new contents intact, for eternity. □

Q&A

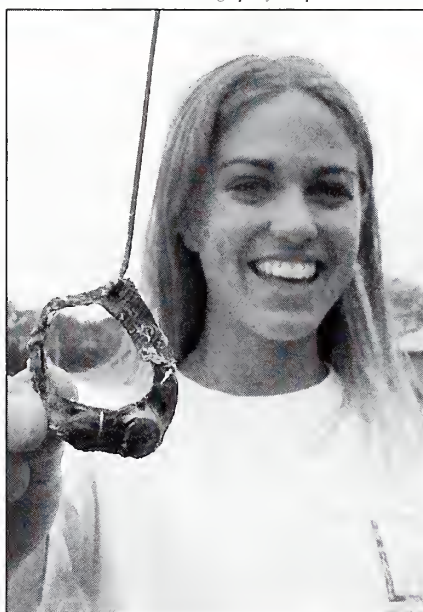
Question & Answer

Graduate student Sarah Yaremych has captured, tagged and tracked American crows, research that illustrates the relationship between crow behavior and that species' sensitivity to the West Nile virus. The research was part of the St. Charles resident's final project for her master's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign specializing in urban wildlife and disease management.

This is an edited version of her conversation with Joseph Andrew Carrier.

Q. Tell us about your research.

Urban sprawl negatively impacts many wildlife species, but the crow seems to benefit. I wanted to figure out how they adapted so successfully. I started my research about the time West Nile began to be seen in the northern part of the state. I attached radio transmitters so I could track their movement patterns, and, most importantly, figure out where they roost at night. When



Sarah Yaremych holds a radio collar for crows.

they are sitting in the tree sleeping, they are most vulnerable to mosquitoes. I did some mosquito trappings at the areas

where the crows were roosting and then analyzed them for the virus. I also took blood samples from the captured crows and tested them for viral antibodies.

Q. Could you explain how your findings relate to our understanding of the virus?

This study shows the impact of the virus on a wildlife population without the immunity resources. The crow population has been hit pretty hard. When they are exposed, most of them die. There have been quite a few lab studies where birds are exposed to the virus, but this is in the birds' natural habitat. Sixty-eight percent of the crows I was tracking died, and 95.1 percent of all the deaths in the crows we studied were due to West Nile. With such a high mortality rate, we don't know how the species will recover.

Q. We're heading into mosquito season. Based on what you are seeing, what can we expect?

It will depend on weather patterns, and what the mosquito species are doing. Most of the crow deaths didn't occur until late summer. So we won't really know until the summer progresses.

Q. Do you think your efforts have helped educate people on the importance of these birds?

They did get a bad rap, and they still do. I've heard them called "rats with wings." A lot of people wonder why I am in their backyard at 10 at night or 5:30 in the morning. But if they are interested and willing to listen, they can learn a little bit about the bird and the virus. Obviously, they are agricultural pests, and that is part of it. People used to use dynamite and bomb roost sites, and it would literally rain dead crows. I think we've come a long way since those days.

They're in there.

Talking about something.

But sometimes, talking isn't the problem.

It's understanding that's difficult.

For in-depth discussion and analysis of news at the Statehouse and across Illinois, turn to the public affairs programming on WSEC-TV, **LAWMAKERS** with Mark McDonald and **CapitolView** with Ben Kinningham.

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Stay curious



BUGS

He teaches appreciation of the natural world

Michael Jeffords tells teachers that to communicate their excitement about nature to their students they must "think about the natural world with the mind of a biologist, see the natural world through the eyes of an artist and express their findings about the natural world with the words of a poet."

That's what he has done for the past 25 years as a biologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, which is housed on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. An expert in entomology, Jeffords has helped catalog the biological diversity of Illinois insects. As a photographer, Jeffords has captured images of the flora and fauna that grace the Illinois landscape. And, as an essayist, Jeffords has put into words what he finds in his explorations. His photography and writing is featured prominently in the natural history survey's *Illinois Steward* magazine. Over the years, some of it has appeared in *Illinois Issues*, too.

Jeffords works with volunteers as well as teachers. He recently helped organize a one-day biological survey at Lake Calumet, a former industrial region on the southeast side of Chicago that is now home to endangered and threatened species. Through the survey, called a biodiversity blitz, volunteers catalog plant and animal species and track their numbers.

"People see biodiversity firsthand, and see scientists in action, and in the end it demystifies a lot of what biologists do," he says.

Jeffords says he's fortunate to have a job he loves. "My job is my hobby and my hobby is my job. There is really no distinction between the two."

Joseph Andrew Carrier

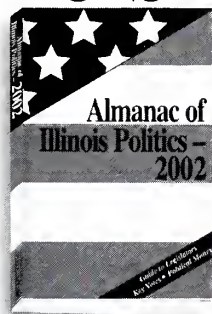
Appointments

Anthony Rossi is the new executive director of the Capital Development Board. He has served as Illinois House clerk since 1993, with the exception of two years when the GOP controlled the House.

Carolyn Adams of Chicago, a senior account manager for Clear Channel Communications, has been named superintendent of the Lottery division of the Illinois Department of Revenue. Previously she worked in the marketing departments at two Chicago radio stations.

Col. Randal Thomas, a Gillespie resident and commander of an infantry brigade of the Illinois National Guard, has been named the governor's adviser on military affairs under the title of adjutant general and director of military affairs.

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Continue progress of modern agriculture

As science director of the Chicago-based Heartland Institute, which specializes in studying environmental, climate and agricultural issues, I was shocked to see a great state university publish such unscientific and inaccurate articles about Illinois agriculture as "Digging Dirt" and "Growing Change" in your April issue (see pages 23 and 25).

The former article describes agriculture as a destroyer of land and the environment, which is simply not true in 98 percent of our state.

In fact, with the growing advent of reduced tillage agriculture, we are eliminating soil erosion, improving soil tilth, reducing air pollution, increasing natural habitat and surface water quality while greatly increasing yields. Your author describes agriculture in the Dark Ages. He obviously knows little about Illinois agriculture but is instead pursuing a political agenda that is anti-capitalist and anti-industry and obviously anti-modern agriculture.

Similarly, "Growing Change" is an article that lobbies for organic farming, which may be a nice niche market for those who can con the public into paying double for their food even though it generally does not look as good or taste as good. But the real problem is that organic farming cannot feed the world, as yields rarely exceed 50 percent of modern agriculture.

Today, nearly 2 billion people on the planet are undernourished, and in 40 years 2 billion more people will be added to the world's population before it stabilizes at about 8.5 billion. These people will be undernourished as well unless we continue on the path of progress of modern agriculture.

Jay Lehr
Chicago

Correction

In a May story titled "Highway Noise," we mistakenly included Union County and omitted Johnson County from the southern Illinois empowerment zone.



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Madeleine Doubek



The Ho-Chunk Nation is polishing a pitch for a casino in the suburbs

by Madeleine Doubek

While state legislators were bickering with Gov. Rod Blagojevich over whether video poker and slot machines at horse racing facilities were the answer to the state's budget problems, members of the Ho-Chunk Nation were polishing their own pitch for a whole other casino complex in the Northwest suburbs.

Complex indeed. Ho-Chunk officials proposed to build a massive 200,000-square-foot casino with 6,000 slots and 200 table games north of Interstate 90 in Hoffman Estates. The 6,200-member tribe purchased an option to buy land situated in an already-crowded corridor between the suburbs' premier Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg on the east and the Grand Victoria casino just a stone's throw away on the west.

The massive gambling mecca would be nearly three times the size of the Elgin casino with five times the gaming posts. Both the Grand Victoria and Ho-Chunk's largest U.S. casino facility near the Wisconsin Dells are 80,000 square feet. Non-Indian Illinois casinos still can have no more than 1,200 gambling spots, while the Dells' site has 3,200. But the Ho-Chunk Nation didn't stop there in rounding out their grand vision for a Dells-like development in Illinois. They unveiled plans that also called for a 12-story, 801-room hotel, a 127,000-square-foot indoor-outdoor water park, an 8,000-seat auditorium and an American Indian museum and cultural center. The plan also features four restaurants and 19,000 parking spaces.

What would such a massive development do to Grand Victoria or the state's top horseracing facility?

The tribe already has the support of Hoffman Estates Mayor Bill McLeod who may be salivating at the jobs and dollars this mini-nation of a development would bring. Surprisingly, municipal officials in neighboring South Barrington and Schaumburg did not balk, though Schaumburg is designing a convention center with a performing arts center just a few exits east along I-90.

Ho-Chunk officials estimate construction at \$120 million and say the complex could funnel \$1 billion into the suburban economy annually.

But what would such a massive development do to Grand Victoria or the state's top horseracing facility, Arlington Park, less than 15 miles away? And beyond business competition, what would it do for already-clogged roadways in the Northwest corridor?

Nothing good seems the obvious answer. The tribe may have chosen the Hoffman Estates location because it is situated in a well-developed area that already is home to several hotels, high-end restaurants and shopping. A Ho-Chunk complex could be a destination location just off I-90, but whether it

should be is an entirely different question.

Suburban state legislators question the wisdom of the location, but Ho-Chunk officials say they believe they have a right to Illinois land. Ho-Chunk, formerly the Winnebago tribe, asserts northern Illinois once was its ancestral land. Indian land claims are federally negotiated. The National Indian Gaming Commission, not state legislators, regulates Indian gambling operations.

But because the Indians' proposal involves a casino, state and federal officials agree Illinois' governor has final approval over such tribal gambling plans. Blagojevich clearly isn't warming to a suburban mini-Dells.

"Something like that, I think, has a big burden of proof. And something like that would have to be extremely convincing and extremely compelling and would have to substantially improve schools, health care and public safety to have me take a real look at it," he told reporters after the details were revealed to the *Daily Herald*. "Right now, I'm nowhere near that."

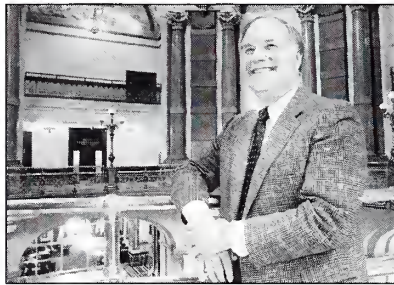
If Blagojevich remains unswayed, he will follow the pattern of his predecessors who have blocked attempts to establish suburban Indian gambling. Former Gov. Jim Edgar stopped a giant bingo hall in Schaumburg in 1991, a St. Croix Chippewa plan for gambling in Rolling Meadows in 1992 and a casino proposal for West suburban Romeoville in 1996. A claim and lawsuit by the Miami tribe over farmland owned by downstate families for generations was floated and dropped during former Gov. George Ryan's term as well.

It seems unlikely the Ho-Chunks would proceed with an entertainment complex without the revenue-generating casino at its core.

Ho-Chunk's lobbyist Roland Burris, a former Illinois attorney general, faces a daunting task to win over Blagojevich and secure approval for Illinois' first tribal gambling/entertainment complex. "It's really going to test our abilities," Burris says, "to be successful on behalf of our clients." □

Madeleine Doubek is deputy managing editor at the Daily Herald, a suburban metro newspaper.

Charles N. Wheeler III



The governor shifted the anti-pollution agency to fee-based finance in the new fiscal year

by Charles N. Wheeler III

An alarming scenario could be brewing for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The potential nightmare for the state's pollution fighters doesn't include visions of corrosive fumes enveloping a town or toxic wastes polluting a local water supply.

Rather than chemistry gone awry, the looming disaster is rooted in the state's fiscal problems. Simply put, the EPA could run out of money to operate in the new fiscal year, which began July 1.

Similar ominous prospects of budget shortfalls could face a number of other state agencies, all of whom share a common thread: Each is losing all or most of its funding from the General Revenue Fund, the state's hard-pressed checkbook account. Instead, operations at the agencies are to be supported in greater measure with funds derived from fees paid by the industries the agencies regulate.

The EPA, for example, lost more than \$23 million in general revenue funding, some \$17 million of which covered almost one-third of the agency's payroll. To replace the lost money, the new budget counts on revenues generated from higher licensing and permit fees. But the new funds the EPA and other affected agencies are relying on might not be available in the wake of an almost certain court challenge to the new revenue stream.

The funding shift was part of Gov. Rod Blagojevich's plan to narrow the

But the new funds the EPA and other affected agencies are relying on might not be available in the wake of an almost certain court challenge to the new revenue stream.

state's \$5 billion budget gap without increasing income or sales tax rates.

In his budget address, the governor noted that many agencies, like the EPA, should be able to support their operations from fees, rather than from general tax revenue, if existing licensing and permit fees were increased.

"For example, there are more than enough corporations who need pollution permits to fund the EPA," Blagojevich said. "From now on, polluters will pay \$21 million per year to clean up the hundreds of Illinois lakes and rivers they dirty with their dumped garbage and industrial waste."

Indeed, the EPA spending plan lawmakers approved for FY 04 calls for almost all of the agency's day-to-day pollution fighting activities to be paid for with revenues from licensing and

permit fees, rather than with general taxes.

To bankroll the shift for the EPA and other affected agencies, the legislature raised hundreds of fees on scores of businesses and dozens of activities, good for an estimated \$326 million in new revenue in FY 04.

Therein lies the peril for the EPA and the other agencies, and a clear invitation for a court challenge. Because the governor wanted extra dollars for the general funds, too, in most cases the fee hikes were much higher than what would have been required simply to pay the costs of regulation. In the EPA's case, four new fees and eight increased fees will produce an estimated \$55 million, of which only about \$22 million will go into the agency's budget, with the rest slated for the General Revenue Fund.

Nor are the higher environmental fees the only ones aimed at closing the budget gap. Insurance companies and agents, for example, will pay an estimated \$26 million more in FY 04, according to legislative analysts, while outlays for the agency that regulates them, the Department of Insurance, go down by almost \$2 million. Similarly, finance companies, title insurers, currency exchanges and credit unions will pay almost \$5 million more in fees, while regulators at the Department of Financial Institutions take a \$1 million budget cut.

In fact, one provision gives the state

budget director generic power to siphon revenues raised by the new and increased fees into the General Revenue Fund from the accounts into which they normally would go. While shoring up general funds by boosting fees might seem like a great idea to someone who's intent on avoiding higher income and sales tax rates, the Illinois Supreme Court might not agree.

In 1984 and again in 1986, the court threw out separate fee hikes, first on divorce filings, then on marriage licenses, intended to fund domestic violence shelters and services. The court ruled that fees having no relation to the services rendered, but assessed to provide general revenue, were in fact taxes, and that the legislature could impose such fees upon a limited group of taxpayers to pay general government costs only if there were some rational relationship between those being taxed and the purpose for which the money would be used.

Given the case law, a challenge to the governor's fee increases seems likely.

In 1984 and again in 1986, the court threw out separate fee hikes. The court ruled that fees having no relation to the services rendered, but assessed to provide general revenue, were in fact taxes.

One might reasonably question, for example, whether charging auto dealers \$1,000 instead of \$50 for an annual license or doubling the permit fees developers must pay for water and sewer hookups — or imposing most of the other new and higher fees — bears a rational relationship to providing more money for local schools, for health care

for the indigent and for prison costs, the chief beneficiaries of general funds spending.

For the EPA and the other agencies moving to fee-based finance, the immediate threat is not that the Supreme Court will invalidate the fee hikes. Rather, the danger lies in the likelihood that a trial court will find the challenge meritorious enough to deny them the new revenues. Whether the judge throws the fees out entirely, blocks their imposition for a time, or orders the proceeds held in escrow, the loss of those dollars would seriously undermine operations of the EPA and the other affected agencies.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court might find such a link. In the meantime, though, the cash shortfall stemming from the legal wrangling could hamstring the EPA's efforts to keep a closer eye on the very polluters the governor excoriated. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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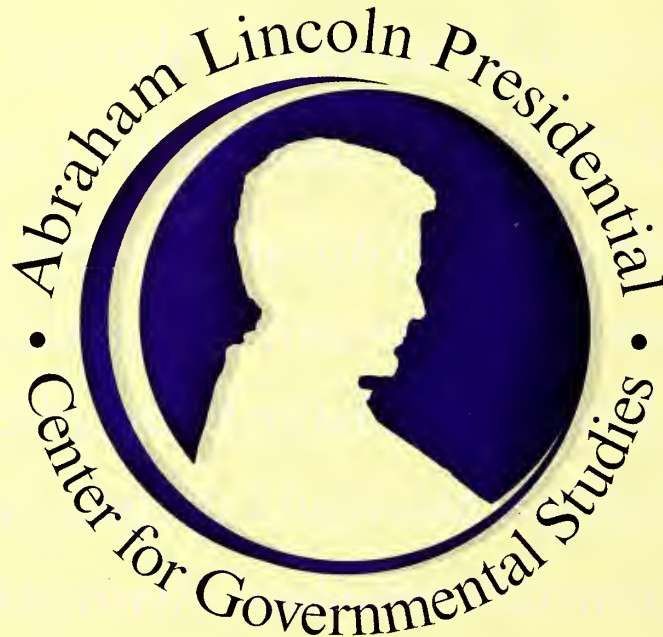
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